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## [Take the Guesswork Out of Healthy Eating with the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines](#)

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Establishing and maintaining a healthy eating pattern can be challenging. This can be done by creating supportive environments at home and at work.

Are you confused about what you should and should not eat? You're not alone. All the conflicting nutrition information available can be overwhelming. That's where the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*<sup>1</sup> can help. It offers nutrition guidance to promote health and prevent chronic disease. Familiarizing yourself with the new *Dietary Guidelines* can help you make healthy food choices and enhance your overall well-being. The 2015 *Dietary Guidelines* focuses on healthy eating patterns as a lifelong approach to wellness and weight management instead of dieting, which can be hard to sustain long-term and often results in unhealthy behaviors. Your eating patterns include everything you eat and drink over time, rather than the individual choices you make for one meal. Make sure your choices support a lifetime of well-being by developing a healthy eating pattern which includes:

- Colorful vegetables, including dark green, red, and orange
- Fruits, especially whole fruits
- Grains, at least half of which are whole-grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy, dairy products, or fortified alternatives (soy beverages)
- A variety of protein foods, such as seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, nuts, seeds, and soy products
- Oils, such as heart healthy olive or canola oil

Dietary supplements are not replacements for healthy eating. Strive to eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods, which are loaded with essential vitamins and minerals as well as dietary fiber, to fuel your body. Make healthier choices by limiting foods and beverages that are high in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. These foods often contain few nutrients, which is why they're referred to as empty calories. As part of your healthy eating pattern choose foods and beverages with:

- Less than 10 percent of calories per day from added sugars

- Less than 10 percent of calories per day from saturated fats
- Less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day from sodium



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In contrast to previous *Dietary Guidelines*, the 2015 *Dietary Guidelines* removed the recommendation to limit dietary cholesterol that is found in animal foods such as eggs, dairy products, and meat. The shift in guidance is due to a lack of evidence to support a link between dietary cholesterol consumption and elevated cholesterol levels in the blood. However, the current *Dietary Guidelines* does suggest that a healthy eating pattern includes approximately 100 to 300 mg of dietary cholesterol per day. The *Dietary Guidelines* also recommend avoiding trans fat as much as possible and accounting for calories from alcohol in your healthy eating pattern. Establishing and maintaining a healthy eating pattern can be challenging. This can be done by creating supportive environments at home and at work. Make sure you surround yourself with family, fellow service members, and friends who support and encourage your healthy lifestyle. Get started on developing your healthy eating pattern today by talking to your health care provider or registered dietitian about how you can use the 2015-2020 *Dietary Guidelines* to make healthy food and beverage choices every day.

**References** <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>. Published January 2016. Accessed January 2016.

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